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Die Sprache der Bribri-Indianer in Costa Rica. Von H. PITTIER DE FÁBREGA. Herausgegeben von Dr. FRIEDRICH MÜLLER. Wien, 1898. 8°, 150 pp., map.

This monograph appeared in the *Sitzungsberichte* of the Academy of Sciences of Vienna, and was issued about two months after the death of the distinguished editor. Professor Müller was certainly the most comprehensive student of languages of his generation, although probably not the most profound of linguists. He did not venture deeply into the philosophy of human speech, and treated languages more from their historic and ethnographic aspects.

For his knowledge of American idioms Professor Müller stood easily first, his great work, the *Grundriss der Sprachwissenschaft*, presenting the analysis of forty-two of these tongues. No one, therefore, could have edited with greater ability the collections in the Costa Rican languages made by Dr Pittier de Fábrega, the President of the Physico-Geographical Institute of that republic.

With characteristic frankness, Professor Müller acknowledges that his explanation of the Bribri verb given in his *Grundriss*, Bd. II, Ab. I, pp. 319, 320, is shown to be incorrect by the new material. He had there stated that the verb was composed of a verbal stem and an inseparable pronominal prefix, and hence the intransitive verb could be regarded as a term of possession. It appears, however, that when the subject is expressed, and sometimes when it is not, the pronominal form may be omitted; nor is the position of subject and object to the verb of a fixed character, as both may precede or follow it.

In these respects the Bribri verb differs from the plan of most American tongues. It is less "incorporative" in its morphology. But that all signs of this process are absent would be far too much to say. The regular construction is to place the object between subject and verb; and there is a class of verbs which permits the object to be infixed (p. 50). It is also stated (p. 40) that the original form of the verb was a substantive with an attached pronominal increment.

Professor Pittier is of opinion that there is in the first person plural an inclusive and an exclusive form; but the editor could not find evidence of this in the texts.

In rendering the sounds of the language, the same alphabet is adopted as in Professor Müller's large treatise. The words differ widely from those in the extensive vocabulary published by William Gabb in 1875; but this is explained by his inaccuracies rather than by a change in mode of utterance. Nevertheless, Professor Pittier acknowledges (p. 26) that it is practically impossible to present an

accurate phonetic spelling, especially as the pronunciation of individuals varies, a circumstance which he curiously attributes to the indolence engendered by a tropical climate.

Both linguistically and ethnologically the original texts offered deserve comment. They are four stories or myths with an interlinear and a free translation. They tell of how the devil *Jaburú* once ate up the human race; how the good god *Sibu* killed the evil spirit *Sór-kura*; how in ancient times men were consumed by beasts and birds; and the adventures of a hunter in the house of the King of the Tapirs. They are delightfully fresh and primitive. The name of the highest good god is *Sibu*, which appears to be a derivative from *sí*, moon. To him, or to one of his forms, *Sibu-sura*, is attributed the creation of the world, and to him go the souls at death. His power of creation, like that of many demiurgic beings in American mythology, is by thought. That which *Sibu* thinks is by that subjective act realized in the objective world. Thought itself is expressed by "that which shakes the liver"; or "that which the liver hears" (*en-bi-kuk*). This notion that the liver is the seat of the intellect is also frequent elsewhere in primitive America.

The general relations of the Bribri language are fully discussed and lead to conclusions of great moment. It has no affinities with any language farther north. On the other hand, it has unquestionable and constant affinity with the other dialects of Costa Rica, including the Guatuso of Rio Frio, and with the idioms of Chiriqui, Veragua, Panama, and the northern portions of South America, notably the Cuna and Chibcha. *The ethnic line of demarcation between North and South America is the Nicaraguan depression*, just about the track of the proposed inter-oceanic canal. In the *American Race* (p. 164) I stated that this line was the mountain chain which separates Nicaragua from Costa Rica; the union of the Guatuso with the Costa Rican stock, removes the line from the mountain crests to their northern base. In this general statement we do not attach importance to the small Nahuatl colonies who had advanced south of the line, nor the possible relations of the Mazatec to the Talamancan group. These were minor historic incidents not affecting the trend of the great migrations.

The linguistic portion of the volume has an ethnographic introduction in which the author discusses the former distribution of the Indian tribes in Costa Rica, their present locations and conditions, and a special ethnologic account of the Bribri. Under the first of these subjects Professor Pittier disputes Señor Peralta's opinion of the extension of the Nahuatl in Costa Rica. In this he may be right, as local names are not always evidence of the permanent presence of the tribes

in whose tongue they occur ; but in his assertion that the Guetares were "a mixture of many stocks," he is in direct conflict with the linguistic evidence. They were, as I have shown, pure members of the Talamancan stock.¹

The social relations of the Bribri are matriarchal. The children belong to the totem of the mother, and the most valued possessions of a man pass at his death to the eldest son of his eldest sister, or to his sisters. Stringent rules prevail in reference to ceremonial uncleanness, especially in sexual relations.

A remarkable statement is made as to the acuteness of their sense of smell. Not only can they distinguish by it what kind of an animal has crossed their path, but, by the intensity of the odor, what time has elapsed since it went by.

The admirable presentation of the material in this book renews our sense of the loss of the learned editor, and encourages the hope that Professor Pittier will be incited to still further researches in this productive field.

D. G. BRINTON.

Introduction to the Study of North American Archæology. By Prof. CYRUS THOMAS. Cincinnati: The Robert Clarke Company. 1898. 8°, xiv, 391 pp., 108 illustrations.

It is a bold writer who, in the present stage of the study of American archeology, ventures to monograph that subject, and it is a fortunate one who proves himself capable of compassing the field in a satisfactory manner. Professor Thomas does not take the full risk, however, since he omits South America from consideration and passes over physical anthropology and the geological features of the subject. There is left the great body of antiquities of North America, which the author proceeds to present in a well condensed and lucid manner well suited to the purposes of an *Introduction*. Passing attention is given to tradition, language, folklore, mythology, customs, and craniology, since these branches are useful in illumining many of the obscure corners of pre-historic times ; but the monuments and minor art remains form the chief bases of the work. Admitting correctly that prehistoric archeology is yet in its infancy, he permits himself to say that this branch is not as yet a "true science," an expression that must be considered as unfortunate. The difficulty with archeology as it stands today is not that it is unlike any other field of scientific research in character, but that it has been so often treated in an unscientific manner and by writers having little conception of scientific method. It is a science

¹ *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, December, 1897.